

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9213

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 2186

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJECT: THIRTY-FIFTH DAY OF KC DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE

REF: PHNOM PENH 2100

1. SUMMARY: THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL VESSELS LOST THUS FAR FROM MEKONG RIVER CONVOYS HAS REACHED SERIOUS PROPORTIONS. THE KC ARE NOW PROBABLY USING MINES AGAINST THE CONVOYS. THE NUMBER AND ACCURACY OF ROCKET ATTACKS AGAINST POCHENTONG HAS LESSENED, BUT THE KC REPORTEDLY WERE ABLE NONETHELESS TO DAMAGE A NUMBER OF CIVILIAN PLANES ON FEBRUARY 4. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE ACTIVITY NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH AS 7TH DIVISION FORCES FAILED TO LINK UP WITH AN ISOLATED BRIGADE BUT REPORTED KILLING A LARGE NUMBER OF KC SOLDIERS. POSITIONS NORTH OF THE OIL DEPOT IN THIS AREA ARE ALSO UNDER PRESSURE. IN THE PROVINCES, AN IMPORTANT ROAD WAS REPORTED REOPENED, BUT COMMUNIST TROOPS LAUNCHED ATTACKS AGAINST A PROVINCIAL CAPITAL ON ROUTE 5. END SUMMARY.

2. TOTAL COMMERCIAL VESSEL LOSSES FROM THE THREE UP-RIVER AND TWO DOWN-RIVER MEKONG CONVOYS ARE AS FOLLOWS: TWO RICE CARGO VESSELS, THREE OIL TANKERS, THREE TUGS
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AND EIGHT OF THE IMPORTANT PROTECTIVE SHIELD BARGES.

THREE OTHER MISCELLANEOUS SMALLER BARGES AND TUGS OF LESSER IMPORTANCE HAVE ALSO BEEN LOST. IT NOW APPEARS PROBABLE THAT THE KC STARTED USING MINES AGAINST THE FEBRUARY 3 DOWN-RIVER CONVOY (REFTEL) AND THIS ACCOUNTS FOR MANY OF THE ABOVE LOSSES.

3. SIX 107MM ROCKETS WERE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN FIRED AGAINST PHNOM PENH AND POCHENTONG LATE FEBRUARY 3 AND TWELVE MORE THUS FAR FEBRUARY 4. MOST OF THOSE AIMED AT POCHENTONG DID NOT HIT THE TARGET. HOWEVER, THE TWO THAT DID ON FEBRUARY 4 LANDED NEAR THE CONTROL TOWER AND ACCORDING TO INITIAL REPORTS DAMAGED FIVE CIVILIAN PLANES. ONE OF THE ROCKETS IN PHNOM PENH REPORTEDLY HIT THE ROOF OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING, WOUNDING TWO PERSONS.

4. ACTIVITY CONTINUES TO BE HEAVY IN THE 7TH DIVISION AREA NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH. DIVISION TROOPS FAILED TO LINK UP WITH AN ISOLATED BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS BUT REPORTED KILLING OVER 100 KC DURING THE FIGHTING. FREINDLY POSITIONS NORTH OF THE OIL DEPOT ON ROUTE 5 IN THE SAME AREA DETERIORATED CONSIDERABLY DURING THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 3 AND FANK HAS SENT REINFORCEMENTS.

5. IN THE PROVINCES, THE NEWS WAS BOTH GOOD AND BAD. ROUTE 6 BETWEEN SIEM REAP AND THE THAI BORDER, INTER-DICTED BY THE KC FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, IS NOW REPORTED OPEN. ELSEWHERE, HOWEVER, THE KC ATTACKED FRIENDLY POSITIONS AROUND THE ROUTE 5 PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF KOMPONG CHHNANG, REPORTEDLY THREATENING THE SOUTHERN DEFENSES OF THE CITY. THIS INFORMATION, WHICH IS PRE-LIMINARY AND UNCONFIRMED, ALSO STATES THAT THE KC KILLED 20 CIVILIANS, WOUNDED SOME 40 OTHERS, BURNED 100 HOUSES AND CARRIED OFF 30 FAMILIES.

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